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ABSTRACT

Presented in this pamphlet are some guidelines to help parents develop a responsive, flexible parent-child relationship. Based on recent child development theory, this easy-to-read pamphlet offers practical suggestions for developing good self-concept, responsibility, self-confidence, self-discipline, resourcefulness, decision-making and problem-solving skills in children. (CS)

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# Child Development in the Home

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# Foreword

Many parents feel that a ild begins to learn only when goes to school. But this is t true. You, the parent, are e first and most important acher your child will ever ve. Even when a child starts hool, the home is still his assroom.

Most specialists who study ild development agree that e first five years are the most portant formative ones in a ld's life. From infancy, your ld tries to learn about the rld inside and outside the me as well as the world of lings inside himself—such as happiness, sadness, anger, r, and frustration. He manip- tes, investigates, imitates, d wants to master as much his environment as he can. a child, learning is a natural d joyful experience.

Your child's ability to learn ny skills in these early years depend on his stage of de- opment and on the encour- ement and opportunities that you, the people he loves and depends upon most, offer him at home and in his surroundings. A responsive and accepting relationship between you and your child in which you act as guide, teacher, and fellow explorer in a fascinating world, will help enhance your child's sense of belonging, his sense of responsibility to himself and to others, and his ability to learn and make decisions. These first attitudes he learns from you will very likely influence him throughout the rest of his life.

Raising children is basically a human relationship between parents and child. There can be no hard-and-fast rules. Parenting styles differ from one family to another and often even vary for different children *within* the same family. However, there are guidelines to help parents develop happy, self-confident, and self-disciplined children. The purpose of this pamphlet is to share a few of these guidelines with you.

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# Developing a Healthy Self-Image

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Your child's self-image is the mental picture he has of himself. A child develops a healthy self-image if:

**He likes himself and believes he is a worthwhile person.** A child with a positive sense of himself, his family and his people (racial, national, community, and religious group) delights in knowing that there is no one else in the world exactly like him. It is reassuring to him to discover that he has an important role in his family because they care about how he feels and what he thinks, says, and does.

**He learns to set realistic goals which he can achieve successfully.**

**He believes he can recognize and deal with problems as he encounters them.**

When a child's image of himself is *not* sound and healthy —if he does not like himself or if he believes others do not like him—he may show this by being aggressive or withdrawn. He may hit or hurt others in order to compensate for his inner pain. He may withdraw into a shell—a personal and private world—to protect himself from what he feels as rejection.

The basic attitudes that make up his "self-image" develop out of what he learns from those who love him and whom he loves best. Of course, later they are partly shaped by his small world of friends, school, and community, but most of all, they are an outgrowth of his home and the people who live with him there.

# Developing a Sense of Responsibility and Helpfulness

When children are three, ur and five years of age they en delight in proving how own up they are. Giving chil- en small responsibilities in e home makes them feel eded and helps them to be- me more competent as well self-confident.

When their early attempts be helpful have been appre- ated, children are usually ady to carry out simple and gular tasks in the home when ey are four or five years old. r example, young children joy dressing themselves if ey have easy slip-on clothing which reduces the frustration of small buttons, bows, and snaps. Setting the table and making his bed (even though it won't be as neat as if you made it) are two other household tasks many young children can handle and enjoy. You will notice that your child enjoys imitating you, and often wants to follow you around the house helping you dust, sweep, empty wastebaskets, sort laundry, fold clothing, feed pets and make simple household repairs. He should be allowed and encouraged to be helpful whenever he can for it will provide him with

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that "super" feeling that small though he is in this world of adults he too is a contributing member of the family and has certain jobs and responsibilities. It is just as upsetting and insulting to a child as it is to an adult to have someone constantly doing everything for him. The beginning of helpfulness and responsibility in children can be crushed by preventing them from doing the jobs they can and want to do even though adults can *always* do them faster and better!

Here are a few general guidelines to help you in encouraging and developing a sense of responsibility and helpfulness in your child:

**Arrange for your child to be successful in the early stages of the task he is learning.**

**Start with simple tasks and work up to more difficult ones as your child's skills increase.**

**Design or alter the activity according to his level of development.**

**Suite the activities or tasks to your child's individual interests.**

**Be cheerful, supportive, and understanding when his capability or interest diminishes and show your willingness to be helpful. The child who is given help when he needs it is best prepared to give help to others when they need it.**

Remember, too, that often when a child is given a job and then doesn't do it, people are annoyed with him which can make him feel unhappy about himself. To help decide if the job given to your child is a reasonable one for him, you might ask yourself some of these questions:

1. **Is it a job he can do well?**
2. **Will it take too much time for him to do it?**
3. **Is the job important to the family?**
4. **Has he had a part in choosing the job?**
5. **Is he getting bored with the same old routine?**
6. **Is he getting enough praise and recognition for doing the job well, or is good performance just taken for granted while poor performance is criticized?**
7. **Does he seem to feel good about doing the job?**

# Developing Resourcefulness

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Resourcefulness and the eceding section on responsi- ity go hand-in-hand: In many ays they are twin traits. A re- urceful child is one who arns over the years to stand on his own two feet. He will find life smoother because he will be able to cope with the world as he finds it, or seek out constructive, new solutions.

Children prize the quality

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resourcefulness in themves. When we hear a child "I want to do it myself!" "Let me!" . . . "I *can* so do . . . "I *am* old enough!" . . . should respect these dends (except, of course, when nger threatens the child or se about them).

How can we help a child become resourceful? Here some suggestions:

**Don't underestimate your child's ability.** Most homes have many kinds of tools which children can use. For example, a 4-year-old can use a sponge or a dust cloth; the 5-year-old can handle a hammer and saw with adult supervision; the 6-year-old can operate a simple camera.

**Children grow in resourcefulness when given the opportunity to see the world around them.** Give your young children varied experiences—riding in a car, a truck, a bus, a tractor, a train, a boat, an elevator, a subway, an escalator. Take them on special trips to nearby stores, parks or playgrounds, the library, the post office, a warehouse, zoo, a pet shop or farm (or safe areas to explore).

3. **Encourage your child to ask questions.** The child who asks questions has a valuable tool for self-confidence and independence.
4. **Let your child speak for himself.** When the dentist, the doctor, the storekeeper, or the teacher speak to your child, let your child give his own reply.
5. **Allow your child to run any errand he possibly can.** Let him do things such as carry a message to a next-door neighbor, mail a letter or pick up the mail, and get the newspaper.

Your goal as parents should be to give your children enough help to make them feel comfortable. Of course, you should not push children; you cannot brush away shyness; you should not force children to "speak up" when they feel better being quiet; and you should not force them into situations where they feel ill at ease. But if you give him the chance to do things when he's ready, your child can get a real thrill—a sense of being resourceful, capable, and increasingly able to cope on his own with life's many challenges.

# Developing Decision-Making Skills

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When you permit your child o make decisions, he finds out bout alternatives—what it is ke to make a choice and live vith it. You can help your child grow in this way by creating situations where he can choose nd decide about things in his ife. When you can, let your oungster plan some of his own nd your family's activities and use his ideas whenever possible.

Keep the choices simple: "Do you want me to read this book, or that one?" "You can have one of these three toys." "We can sit in the back of the bus or near the door." "Would you like a fancy cake dessert for dinner or shall we have jello?"

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# roblem-Solving Skills

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When a child is faced with roblem, he may not be able deal with it and he needs r help to learn how. When a zzle piece doesn't fit in place, an ice cream cone falls onto sidewalk, he naturally turns you for help.

If you want your child to velop problem-solving skills, e time to talk about prob- ns as they occur. Naturally, s is not always easy to do. oblems have a way of creep- up at unexpected moments, en at the most inconvenient e. Nevertheless, do make the ort when you can to discuss em with your child. Here is e approach to use:

**Identify the problem and what caused it.** This is a skill that children do not learn without help. For example, perhaps a child frequently knocks over his juice glass on the table. He may not realize that the problem is that the glass is placed so close to his elbow that it is always on-target for being accidentally knocked over. Once the problem is identified, you can help him with the next skill which is . . .

2. **Choosing a solution.** This step takes courage. Some children are so afraid of being wrong they cannot solve problems. Talk over several solutions to a problem with him, and between the two of you decide which one is best then let him try it out. You can help him to realize that problems *can* be solved.

If the problem is such that it is impossible to discuss at the moment it happens, save it for later, when you and your child have more time to talk. (However, try not to save unpleasant topics for mealtime conversation.)

Another important aspect of problem-solving is helping the child to understand the laws of "cause and effect." For example, if he pushes over a flower vase, it will fall and probably break. If he writes on the wall with crayon or magic marker it will leave a mark. Once a child understands the relationship between cause and effect, he will be building the foundation for two additional skills:

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. **Anticipating what can happen in certain situations.**
. **Recognizing what has already happened in others.**

For example, if he sees someone push a flower vase, he expects it to fall. If he sees crayon marks on the wall, he can tell how they got there.

The ability to deal with problems by identifying them and solving them does not come easily for children—nor for many adults! It takes patience on your part, much practice on the part of the child, frequent talks between you and your child and a good sense of humor in both.

# Rewarding Your Child

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**Approval**

It is important for everyone to have faith in oneself. Approval is one important way of rewarding and developing a child's belief in his own worth. The most meaningful reward for a child is the love, interest, and attention he gets from his mother and father and his family. Listening to the child, hugging him, smiling at him, talking to him, and praising him, are the things that make him feel good inside, spur him on to do his very best, and will give him a deep sense of his own worth.

Children need lots of approval and praise when they are little. As they grow older, they will most likely develop self-confidence and need less approval from others.

**Allowances**

An allowance is, in one sense, a child's share of the family income. It can be a worthwhile educational experience that parents can provide their children. The amount should be what the family can afford. It should be given to the child to do with as he pleases, and should not be used as a bargaining tool to win a child's good behavior.

An allowance is not a bribe. Think of it as a learning tool which can give a child a realistic, first-hand experience in planning how his money is to be spent and how to get maximum value for what he buys. It can help a child begin to develop his skills in arithmetic and logic.

Most children make mistakes and buy unwisely at the outset. They may rush to spend all their money the minute they get it, forgetting that once spent there will be no more for several days. From such haste, children can begin to learn to be selective in their purchases and careful in their spending.

When should you begin to give an allowance and how much you should start with are questions parents often ask. Sometime around his fifth birthday your child may ask for an allowance such as his friends or his older brothers and sisters enjoy. Or you may begin considering the advantages of an allowance because of daily requests for ice cream or candy. You may wish to start a young child on a small weekly allowance but half the amount twice

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a week may prove a blessing to the child who finds a week too long. A child will soon figure out that he can have two candy bars this week, or he can save his allowance for two weeks and buy a toy, but he cannot have both candy and toy.

Here are a few suggested do's and don'ts about a child's allowance:

**Don't control your child's buying. If he makes his own mistakes, he is more likely to learn from them.**

**Don't insist that he "save" something out of his allowance.**

**Don't withhold allowance money as punishment for misbehavior.**

**Don't link the allowance with money the child may receive for performing household chores.**

**BUT**

Do keep your child's expanding needs in mind when deciding on the amount of an allowance.

Do encourage your child to be generous.

Do help your child understand that money isn't everything. While it can buy many things, no amount of money will buy loyalty, friendship, love and respect.

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# Developmental Games Parents can Play with Children

Young children learn most effectively through play. There are many games and activities you and your child can have in doing together that will help develop a child's self-image.

**Self Portrait**

Place a large piece of paper on the floor (brown wrapping paper is good) and have your child lie down on the paper. Then trace the outline of his body with a crayon or magic marker.

Let your child color the portrait. When he's finished, help him cut it out, and hang it up for everyone to see.

**Make a Family Tree**

To help your child understand the idea of "family" and to learn more about just who makes up his own particular family, gather as many photos of family members as you can. Draw a big tree, with your child as the focal point. On the extending branches paste the photos of brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, nieces, and nephews. Wherever possible point out shared characteristics—he has the same color hair as grandfather, dimples like Mommy, etc.

3. **Make a Picture Map of Your Neighborhood**

Help your child draw a picture map of the neighborhood in which you live. First take a walk together and let him decide on the things he'll want on his map: the houses where his friends live, the playground, the post office, the library, the mail box, a favorite tree, and so on. When you get home, spread a large piece of paper on the floor and help your child mark out where each thing will go. Start by marking where you live and the street you live on. Then add on the other homes and points of interest. Label each picture on the map. Your child may want to add toy trucks, cars, and tiny dolls if he has them to make a working community to play with. Use the map also to plan where you will be going before you leave or to show where you've been when you come home.

4. **Make a Diary**

Help your child keep a diary. After a birthday party or any special event or trip, set

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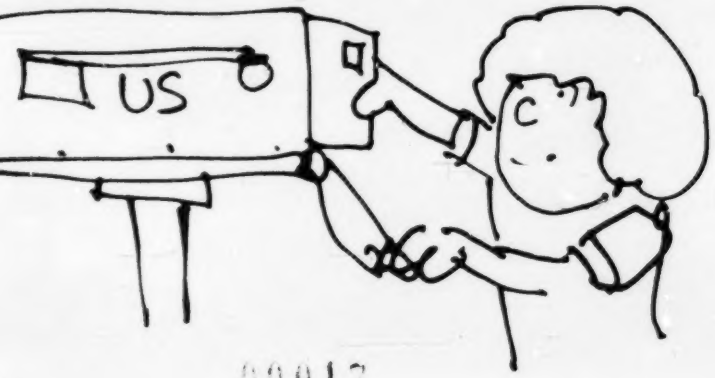
some time aside with your child to record what happened. Write the event and the date it happened on the page and then ask your child: "What do you want to say about the party (the trip)?" "What part was the most fun?" "Why did you like it best?" Write down whatever he dictates. Illustrate the page with drawings, photos, or pictures cut from magazines. The diary will also be a good place to paste all kinds of treasures—favorite drawings, paintings, birthday cards—anything your child wants to keep. If he wants to, always let him give you a title for you to write at the top of each page.

5. **Mail**

   Receiving mail is a special thrill for preschoolers: adults seem to get *all* the mail. Take advantage of the coupons you find in magazines, on the backs of cereal boxes, or in the newspapers. Help your child fill in his name and address, let him stick on the stamps, and put the envelope in the mailbox. Also, you can from time to time write and mail your own child a post card. When the mail comes for your child, it will be an exciting experience for him and he will have a feeling of importance.



# Responsibility for Small Chores

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Children will enjoy helping h small chores in the house you tailor these to their de- opment, skills, and interest. range it so your child can rform the task successfully. erwise he may get discour- ed and give up. Here are just ew small chores you can try h your child.

**Putting away toys**
Give your child some plain brown shopping bags or boxes. Explain that one is for blocks, one for dolls, another for cars, and so on. He can draw pictures on the outside of the bags or boxes and you can label them. When pick-up time comes, let him put away his toys by sorting them. Your child will work more enthusiastically if you help him.

**Empty wastebaskets**
The basket shouldn't be heavy or too large for the child to handle. Give him clear directions where the trash is to go.

3. **Wash and dry dishes**
He can wash his own plate nd cup. It's best to use non-breakable dishes.

4. **Sorting laundry**
Let him sort one or two items, his socks, his shirts.

5. **Making his own bed**
Show how to make it. Help him and don't be too critical of the way he does it. This is a hard task and the child needs encouragement and praise to continue doing this job.

6. **Picking out his own clothes and dressing himself**
Keep his clothes on low racks or in low drawers so he can easily reach them himself.

7. **Setting the table**
Do a place setting yourself and let your child follow your model. At first he'll make mistakes, but with encouragement and praise, he'll soon be able to do it correctly.

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# Trips: Adventure is Just Around the Corner

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Here are a few suggestions for trips you can make with your child.

**1. Firehouse**
—The tools firemen use to put out fires
—The fire trucks
—Find out how firemen know where to go to put out fires
—Ask what each fireman does at the fire

**2. Construction Site**
—Go often to see what progress has been made
—See how many different machines are used
—Watch one man at a time and try to guess what his job is

**3. The Post Office**
—Take a self-addressed letter and find out what happens when you mail it
—Look for it in your mailbox the next day

**4. The Zoo or the Pet Shop**
—Go at feeding time, if possibl
—Listen to the many differer sounds animals make
—Find out what different an mals and birds eat
—Watch the different ways the eat. Do they use their claw teeth, beak?

**5. The Florist**
—Watch the florist make flora arrangements
—How many different flowe can you see?
—Smell the flowers
—Take a flower home

**6. The Library**
—Look at all those books!
—Talk to the librarian and as her to show you what sh does
—Pick out a book together

# Play Kits

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Children love to imitate ownups. And as they do, ey learn about roles, jobs and w it feels to be an important erson with special tasks to erform. Encourage your young- er to try out new roles and ew activities. You supply the ops—he'll do the pretending you put the right things in his nds.

**Kitchen Kit**

ots, pans, bowls, egg beater, poons, measuring cups, meas- ing spoons, cookie sheets, ake pans, a cardboard carton rned upside down for a stove.

**2. Dressup Kit**

Fancy hats, dresses, jewelry, pocketbooks; shirts, ties, shoes, coats.

**3. School Kit**

Paper, pencils, crayons, chalk, small blackboard, books.

**4. Supermarket Kit**

Toy cash register, play money, price tags, sales slips pad, un- opened canned goods, empty food containers, used cake mix boxes, wax fruit.

# Conclusion

Perhaps no other task in life is so demanding of skill and knowledge, so challenging to the imagination, but so worth the effort as the job of being a parent. This pamphlet has been prepared to offer a few practical hints for broadening and enriching the lives of your children. The suggestions offered within these pages are not necessarily intended to be followe step-by-step: Some days yo may be able to fit in more idea than on others. But even if yo cannot do everything this book let suggests, do what you ca within the time you have avail able to share with your childre —you will be pleased and proud at the results.

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